

Notes from a Brave Tangled Dragon

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Category: Brave, 2012, Rise of the Guardians

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-08-27 23:49:17

Updated: 2014-08-27 23:49:17

Packaged: 2016-04-26 19:47:01

Rating: K

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,774

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: What would an actual Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons feature length film look like? A collection of thoughts and theories about the wildly popular crossover known as "The Big Four". Feel free to draw inspiration from this!

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The following is not so much a story as it is a collection of thoughts about what an actual full length feature film for Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragonsâ€"that is, the enormously popular crossover that takes Hiccup (How To Train Your Dragon), Rapunzel (Tangled), Merida (Brave), and Jack Frost (Rise of the Guardians), and teams them up Avengers styleâ€"would look like. It's really just kind of a geeky rambling of mine; straight up notes on character development and such that I thought would be nice to share with anyone who legitimately enjoys thinking about the creative potential of ROTBTD. :)

So I'm a huge fan of the Big Four. Not only are Tangled, Brave, HTTYD and ROTG four of my favorite movies, but four works of art that inspired me to pursue animation as a career, and four stories that have individually rocked me heart and soul. I'm completely drawn to the idea of seeing four of my favorite characters cross paths on one grand, epic adventure, and I'm enough of a dreamer to say that if Disney and DreamWorks really wanted to work something out, a feature film based off of this concept would sell like hotcakes. But even though this crossover enchants me, I'm disappointed with what I find when I type ROTBTD into a search box. Not only does the crossover seem to get a lot of hate from non-fans, but it's disturbing how the lack of quality in most of the stuff most ROTBTD fans come up with actually merits that response. Shipping, modern AUs, poorly written stories that all seem to come from the same cookie cutter moldâ€"is that really what this crossover is all about? Is this really the best we can do to try and show Disney and DreamWorks that "The Big Four" is a good idea? People will never take this seriously until we start

taking it seriously ourselves, and that is why I'd like to commence on a long analytical rant regarding my thoughts about ROTBTD, some misconceptions the fandom has about the characters involved, and some things that would make this a truly special film if it were to ever hit the silver screen. So, buckle up with the non-existent seatbelts of North's sleigh, and hold on tight. Here we go!

****Thought #1: The film would take place during a time period where the timelines of the four franchises overlap. Thus, it would be a prequel to Rise of the Guardians.****

Before we can even begin to talk about ROTBTD being a real movie, we have to eliminate any element of time travel that would be necessary. Let's put aside worm holes and the use of magic portals all together, because while we'd all love to see an animated David Tennant step out of a TARDIS at some point, it's just not practical. One of the most common things that turns people off to the idea of this crossover is the fact that all four movies take place during different time periods, so there's no way they could possibly meet up. While this is (for the most part) true, it's even more ridiculous to shoe-horn in some unnecessary method of time travel just to get them together. If I can get you to extend your believability just a little bit, the four time periods of the films are really not as off as it seems, and the argument can be made that they all exist within the same universe and timeline.

With the exception of Rise of the Guardians, each of these movies take place during a sort of whimsical, unrecorded period of history. Brave takes place during the early days of monarchy, when kingdoms and the laws of protocol in royalty were still being established. While Rapunzel's kingdom in Tangled is obviously more advanced than Dunbroch, it is just slightly hinted that Corona is a new kingdom as well, since the only myth and legends that the kingdom seems to cherish are those surrounding the "beloved king and queen" and their lost daughter. Therefore, it could be taking place in roughly the same time period. As for Hiccup, the Vikings were very tribal people, but this doesn't mean that they didn't live during times when kings and queens ruled elsewhere. Similarly, I think it can be interpreted that Hiccup lives during the later days of the Viking Age, as we slowly start to see his own tribe abandon their savage ways and except more peaceful methods of diplomacy. Tribal tradition is fading away, monarchies are being established—this creates the perfect set up for a merging of these three worlds, allowing not only for an interesting mesh of culture, but some deep emotional conflict for three characters who are dealing with a changing world.

Now all that's missing is Jack. This where things get complicated, because according to canon, Jack fell under the ice in the year 1712. This is long after the late days of the Viking age and early monarchy, and there's just no stepping around that. However—and many people may disagree with me on this—I don't find it to be that big of an issue. During Jack's flashbacks in the movie, we see that the village in which he lived had a very medieval, almost nomadic culture to it, like a small peasant town from a story book land. This seems very fitting with the three universes of Brave, Tangled, and HTTYD. Though hard-core ROTG fans would nip-pick at the timing, the story book nature of these four stories allows for some wiggle room in the timing, and Jack Frost's appearance as a whimsical, mythical figure in any fairy tale universe is at least believable on the surface. This would just mean that the film would have to be set as a

prequel to ROTG, shortly after Jack has been saved from the ice by the Man in the Moon, and is living his lonely, wandering, pre-guardian life, fluttery brown cloak and all.

****Thought #2: As a prequel to **_**Rise of the Guardians**_**, the story would most likely take place in the "Dark Ages" when Pitched roamed free. This would be a reason to make the story very Jack-centric.****

So the stage is set: centuries before Rise takes place, but who knows how long after the events of Tangled, HTTYD and Brave, our favorite quartet of Viking, princesses, and legendary frost elf are unexpectedly called together to battle the forces of evil hand-in-hand. What's the problem? If this quad squad is going to save the world, then they need something to save it from. They need a conflict that affects them all mutually, and an enemy that puts their lives, loved ones, homes, and everything they stand for in danger. Though Mother Gothel from tangled pops up in GIFs and artwork now and then, it's widely accepted in the fandom that the best candidate for the main antagonist of this story would be Pitch Black from ROTG. In this case, the fandom is actually spot on. Why, you ask? Three words: The Dark Ages.

In the beginning of Rise of the Guardians, Pitch Black, the boogie man, King of Nightmares whose only desire is to torture souls and fill hearts with fear, describes the days when he wielded indescribable power over humankind. He monologues fondly as animated images bring the scenario to life:

"_Oh, the Dark agesâ€¦ everyone frightened and miserable. Such happy times for meâ€¦oh, the power I wielded! But then the Man in the Moon chose YOU to replace my fear with your 'wonder' and 'light'. Meanwhile, everyone wrote me off as just a bad dream. 'There's nothing to be afraid of! There's no such thing as the Boogie Man!'"

—

We know that at one time, centuries ago, Pitch Black roamed free, spreading his fear far and wide. But what if, during the Dark Ages, Pitch Black was more than just the Boogie Man? What if he truly was a King of Nightmares, with armies and castles and followers that did his bidding? What if he was a powerful dictator that ruled over the realms of myth and legend with darkness, and the guardians were the resistance, a secret alliance chosen by the Moon to rise up against him? And what if Pitch was so powerful that his reign was slowly beginning to spill over into the human world? Oddly enough, the "Dark Ages" are what we refer to the early European middle ages asâ€¦"a time in history that was anything but pleasant. All the mundane, real-world misfortunes of the middle agesâ€¦plague, poverty, famine, warâ€¦could have been signs of the battle with darkness slowly seeping into the natural realms. Such a time is exactly when the Man in the Moon would need to call in three temporary human guardians, people to protect natural world the way the guardians of childhood protect the supernatural one. Who better than the Lost Princess, the Dragon Whisper, and the Maiden who Changed her Fate? Three leaders, three heirs to the throne, three protectors, three guardians. It's a perfect set up.

However it were to happen, some need, some mission, some calling would draw Hiccup, Merida and Rapunzel all together. Maybe Merida is forced by her mother to go to a ball in Corona to look for wealthy

suitors. Maybe Corona is being terrorized by wild beasts, and the King and Queen have had no choice but to seek help from a Viking boy who tames dragons. Somehow the paths of these three teenagers would cross, and before they know what's going on, they find themselves on an unexpected journey to the North Pole, where the Man in the Moon is calling his guardians to rise up against Pitch. None of them would fully understand this calling. Different beliefs and worldviews would dictate how they each react to it: Merida would believe it to be fate, leading her by a trail of wisps; Hiccup might think it's the Norse gods sending him on this journey; Rapunzel would suspect destiny—the same force that brought Eugene to her tower that day is now calling her to save her kingdom. None of them would know anything about what's really going on, except that they each have a family and a people to protect, and the only way they can do it is together.

Enter Jack. At this point in time, he's just risen up out of the ice. He's just been told his name by the Man in the Moon. He's just discovered that he doesn't really exist. He doesn't know who he is, what he's meant to do, why people can't see or hear him, or why he's alive. But he does know who the Guardians are. And he does know how to get to the North Pole. So when he stumbles across three kids who are searching for just that—three kids who just happen to be his age, and just happen to be the first people he's ever met who can see him—he naturally decides that it would be fun to tag along for the ride. After all, he has nothing better to do. Thus, the rest of our tale ensues.

Setting the film during the Dark Ages would ultimately make it a Jack-centric story. It would make him the real hero of the narrative, because we all know that eventually, he would have to let his three new found friends go. He would have to watch them all return to their own lives and loved ones, knowing he can't be a part of them anymore. If you think about it, it would make a great set up for ROTG to take place years later. Losing his friends could be a catalyst for him to enjoy being on his own: he's tried the whole friendship thing before, and it didn't last. It would allow us to explore what his life and character were like before the days of ROTG. What was he like as a newly resurrected guardian? His innocent selfishness would be so much fun to portray against the backdrop of three stalwart, responsible companions who are fighting for the good of their respective people and cultures. ROTBD would be great for exploring all four of the characters, but especially for developing Jack. In the end, he would be the one who really saves the day.

****Thought #3: If the "Big Four" were forced to work together, they wouldn't suddenly become best friends. In fact, they'd probably be at each other's throats.****

Another thing that I believe turns people off to the idea of ROTBD is the fact that they are so often painted as a fellow-social-rejects, best-friends-who-save-the-world-together bunch. That's what initially turned me off to the idea at least. True, these characters all have similar stories and can relate to each other deeply, but let's face it: if they got thrown into a save-the-world situation together, they would not get along. These are four leaders, four adventurers, four stubborn, courageous teens who have different ideas and opinions about EVERYTHING. They are bound to butt heads non-stop. Rather than an instant buddy-buddy connection, it would be a glorious clash of strong personalities, much like that of The Avengers. In the words

of Bruce Banner, they would be a time bomb, not a team.

Hiccup, as the boy whose curiosity drove him to discover the truth about dragons, would represent a logical and scientific way of thinking. Merida, who believes that "fate lives within us" would be a firm follower of her heart and gut, and probably the most aggressive leader of the group. Rapunzel, with her sunny personality and tender but strong heart, would be the optimistic one, always looking on the bright side. And Jack, who's really just along for the ride, would cause loads friction with his nonsensical ways and knack for mischief. Each character would have their own ideas and underlying motives, and would have to learn how to work together for the good of the mission, but not before almost ripping each other's heads off first.

****4. Other characters would be featured, and each of the big four would be respectively loyal to the characters from his/her own story. ***ABSOLUTELY NO NON-CANON SHIPS WOULD BE ALLOWED, PERIOD.****

If there's one thing that people complain about most when they come across the big four, it's the fact that this growing fandom tends to completely ignore the other characters from the original movies. It's easy to find writing and artwork about Hiccup, Rapunzel, Merida, and Jack all having adventures together. But how often do you come across a story that features Astrid, Elinor, Flynn Rider or any of the Guardians? The problem is that people get so excited about the prospect of seeing the big four altogether that they forget these four characters already have loved ones and life experiences of their own. In fact, family and relationships are exactly what all four of these stories revolve around, but people who don't analyze the narratives properly miss that, and they fall into the trap of making ROTBTD its own alternate universe.

The challenge of telling this type of story would be to intricately weave together all of the relationships, themes, and worldviews presented in these four films. Each of the four would be motivated by a desire to protect the characters with whom they have shared their story thus far. Merida would be all about defending her mother, father, and brothers. Rapunzel would be driven by love for her new-found parents, and even more so, love for her reformed bandit-prince, Eugene. Hiccup's been blessed with tons of relationships in his life: a loving father, a beautiful girlfriend, a whole gaggle of best friends, and an awesome dragon that he literally can't live without. He might even get a little homesick at some point along the journey. Jack, of course, has no one to fight for, but he too is driven by a deeply rooted desire for companionship. Seeing the beautiful way Hiccup, Rapunzel and Merida sacrifice for the ones they love would make him long for his own relationships even more, and thoroughly break him when he has to watch his only friends go back to their own lives. Weaving together all the narrative threads of these four films would be difficult, but if handled correctly, it could create a very powerful story. A film like this has the potential to burst at the seams with beautiful displays of sacrifice and active love. That's all you need to fill the hearts of an emotionally hungry audience.

Of course, this means we would have to completely delete an element that seems to be the backbone of the fandom at the moment: shipping. In a real-world pitch of a film like this, there would be no Merricup, no Hiccupunzel, and no Jackunzel allowed. Nothing. Zilch.

Nada. Sorry guys. I don't mean to diss your ships, but if we want ANY consistency in the story AT ALL, all non-canon romances have to be completely off limits. Not just because two of the four (Hiccup and Rapunzel) _already have significant others_, but because, like I said before, each of them have a mindset of loyalty towards the characters of their respective story. Their hearts are set on protecting the loved ones that they _already have_â€”not finding new ones.

The one exception I think could be made is Jarida, since Merida has no significant other at the moment, and because Jack, prone to clinginess at this point in his life, is likely to develop a small crush on at least one of the girls in the group. But even that, as we know, would be a doomed romance from the start. These role-model characters are too mature to be forced into a high school-esque tale that revolves purely around hormones, crushes, and "how do I feel about him/her/vice versa" drama. Let's give them more respect than that. They would meet, have their glorious clash of personalities, come to trust and respect each other, save the world, and then wish each other well as they each return to the homes and people they hold dear. The end.

****Thought #5: Cool Technical Aspects of ROTBTD****

Now it's time to step into the more professional areas of this subject. If we want to explore what this story would be like as actual product of the film industry, we have to think about the things that would make this movie special from a technical and business standpoint. The greatest industrial triumph that creating this work of art would achieve is the fact that it would force two rival companiesâ€”Disney and DreamWorksâ€”to work together. An impossible feat? Maybe, but very cool to dream about. A film like this would also require the merging of four completely different styles, techniques, and animating systems, a thought of that is enough to give any animation fan both a nerd-attack and a headache at the same time. It would be fascinating to see how separate elements of these four films would mesh together. For example, music. Can you imagine what the soundtrack of _Rise of the Brave Tangled Dragons_ would be like? An epic score that overlays the hauntingly similar themes of "Fate and Destiny" from _Brave_ and "This is Berk" from HTTYD with one another. A comical moment where Rapunzel breaks out into a Disney-esque musical number, and all the other characters stand around wondering what's going on. The shining main theme from ROTG ringing through the cinema as the guardians appear on screen for the first time. And that doesn't even _begin_ to cover the countless fan-written songs that could be featured in the soundtrack. Which, by the way, leads me to my next and final pointâ€”|

****Thought #6: Of the Fans, By the Fans, For the Fans!****

Ok, so let's say that all these crazy ideas and impossibilities actual DID come together to get green light on being a full length feature film. How amazing would that be from a fan's standpoint? If this film ever got off the ground, one of the things that would make it unique would be the fact that it wasn't born of the creators themselves. It was born of the fans. Disney and DreamWorks gave us art to consume, and we took it and made something of our own with it. If this film were to somehow ever to get off the ground, one of the coolest things Disney and DreamWorks could do would be to pay tribute to all the fans who contributed in growing this idea. A head canon could be given a nod to here and there. Fan art could be featured in

the credits. Overall, the whole the thing would be an incredible celebration of what these four fandoms represent; the idea that everyone has their own story, and when these stories cross paths, they inspire each other to carry on the journey. As Merida says herself in Brave, "Our stories are not yet legends, but in them, our bond is struck." This quote is at the heart of this fandom, and would be a perfect core theme in the world's first official animated crossover film.

So there you have it, folks. My thoughts, theories, and head-canons about The Big Four. What do you think? Agree or disagree? Let me know in reviews, and feel free to use this as inspiration for your own fan fiction. I have my own story concocting itself in my head, but it's unlikely that I'll be able to commit to writing it anytime soon, and I doubt mine would be the same as yours anyway. :) I'm realistic enough to know that this film will most likely never happen, but nevertheless, everything centered around ROTBD makes my imagination simply run wild. Who can argue with an idea when it presents such joyous inspiration? :) Thanks for reading, and God bless as always!

~Story

End
file.